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AUTHOR Walker, James E.; Gentry, Ruben
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ABSTRACT

The authors propose a framework for considering ways to meet the needs of black handicapped children. The framework recognizes three aspects: cultural background (ethnic customs, parental status, socioeconomic status, societal acceptancy, and individual uniqueness); teacher preparation (personal qualities, experiences, and teacher training); and the learning process (learning areas and strategies/activities). A summary section lists implications for the Teacher Education Division (TED) of The Council for Exceptional Children, including that TED should advocate that college curricula emphasize the unique needs of black handicapped children, champion the principle of least restrictive environment, and encourage black special educators to assume leadership roles in the education of black handicapped children. (CL)

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Concerns for Meeting the Needs of Black Handicapped Children With Implications for Teacher Education

by

James E. Walker, President
Teacher Education Division

and

Ruben Gentry, Member
Teacher Education Division

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Concerns for Meeting the Needs of Black Handicapped Children
With Implications for Teacher Education

Deeply rooted in the present special education meovement are real concerns for the education of Black handicapped children. Concern is evident from the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) by establishment of an office of minority affairs at its national headquarters (Baca, 1980) and sponsorhsip of a national conference to focus on Black and other ethnic diverse handicapped children. Similarly, the Teacher Education Division (TED) of CEC addresses the needs of Black handicapped children by using the topic as the major catalyst for this position paper.

CEC and its division organizations have companionship in examining the conditions under which minority handicapped children should be educated. Educational practices for Black handicapped children have been a subject of concern for several governing bodies in our society. Federal legislations, court cases, and state and local operational policies and procedures have contained provisions which focus explicitly on the needs of culturally diverse handicapped children.

Of the provisions of P.L. 94-142 (Havery, 1978), the nondiscriminatory testing and evaluation component has direct implications for Black children. The court case of Larry P. vs. Riles stipulated that Black students could no longer be placed in MR classes on the basis of IQ tests as currently administered (Davis, 1981). Brown vs. State Board of Education of Topeka also has implications for the placement of Blacks in special education classes. States, Mississippi for example, have indicated in policy manuals that placement must be based on multifactored assessment. The use of IQ

tests alone has resulted in a disproportionate overrepresentation of Blacks in classes for the MR and underrepresentation in classes for the gifted (Hilliard, 1980). The most recent AAMD definition (Grossman, 1973) also provides for data other than IQ test as a means of classifying an individual as mentally retarded.

It is from selected provisions of recent legislations, litigations, operational policies and procedures, and educational practices that the authors consider the concerns for meeting the educational needs of Black handicapped children. Attention is given to (1) factors in the cultural background of Blacks, (2) preparation of teachers, (3) structuring the learning process, and (4) implications for TED in meeting the needs of diverse handicapped children.

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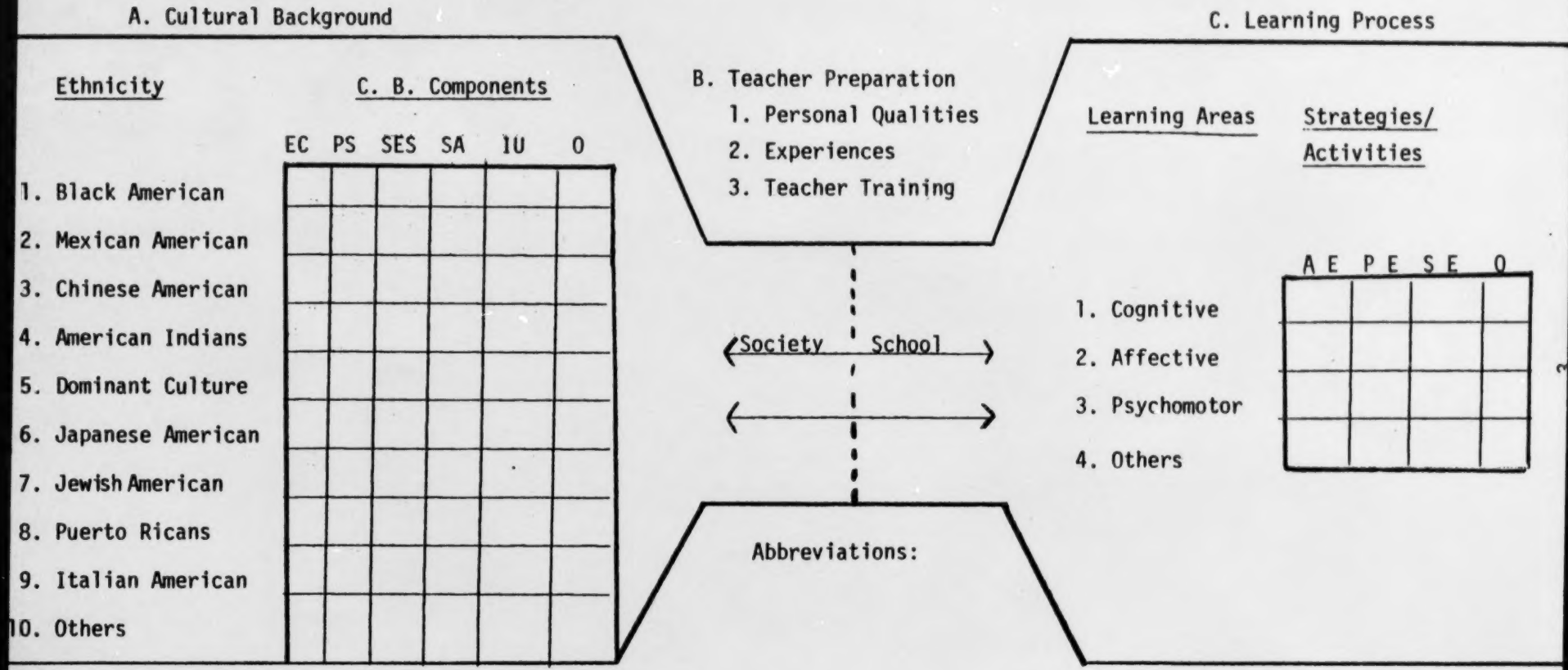
Realizing that diversity exists among and within minority groups (Baca, 1980) it is necessary to devise a systematic means for investigating matters essential to their education. Thus a framework has been designed to consider some concerns, as delineated above, for meeting the educational needs of Black handicapped children. Three major entities (cultural background, the teacher, and the learning process) comprise the framework which may be viewed in a sequential and logical manner. Each major entity has proposed subentities (which should be further delineated and refined as more attention is given to meeting the needs of diverse groups of handicapped children.) Following is a description of the framework with inherent concerns for educating Black handicapped children.

A FRAMEWORK for CONSIDERING CONCERNS in Meeting the NEEDS of BLACK HANDICAPPED CHILDREN



CB Cultural Backgrounds
EC Ethnic Customs
PS Parental Status
SES Socio-Economic Status
SA Societal Acceptancy
IU Individual Uniqueness
O Others

AE Antecedent Events
PE Present Events
SE Subsequent Event
O Others

A. Cultural Background

Blacks represent one ethnic group in the framework. Other ethnic groups (along with the dominant race of society) are presented to show the complement of people in perspective. Contained in the second column of this category are factors to be considered in studying the cultural background of the respective groups. (Please note that this list and other entities in the framework are subject to modification pending more detailed analysis and further study).

Factors given to enable understanding of the cultural background of a particular individual are (1) ethnic customs, (2) parental status, (3) socio-economic status, (4) societal acceptancy of the ethnic group, and (5) unique traits possessed by the individual.

Let us briefly examine the cultural background of Blacks with particular emphasis on the handicapped.

Blacks' presence and influence in American culture have greatly contributed to society over the years. At the same time, while Blacks have been trying to become an integral part of the mainstream of America, many have been unable to penetrate the innermost part of some institutions and have been forced to live apart from the dominant group (Gold and et. al., 1977). But like all human beings, Blacks need affiliation with community and societal institutions which will facilitate their lives and promote a sense of pride in their racial heritage.

Blacks have too long been victims of low socio-economic status, broken homes, and societal institutions that are insensitive to the needs of diverse ethnic groups. Walker (1979) has indicated that many handicapped

minority individuals are faced with sterotypes which have direct implications for their ability to function. Some of the stereotypes these individuals live with are as follows:

-In most instances they are uneducable
-They are untrustworthy
-They have poor social skills
-They perform poorly on tests
-They have more behavior problems
-They will most likely be dependent on society for aid
-They are not usually very verbal
-They have unstable home lives
-Most of them will have no occupational skills as adults
-They have low social values
-Enviornmental conditions preclude handicapped adults and minority adults from providing good adult models for children
-They will never be meaningful contributors to society

The results of such stereotypes have led to dispair and low level motivation on the part of many Blacks to aspire for goals of which they actually have the potential to achieve.

Being Black and handicapped is in too frequent cases a situation of double jeopardy. The conditions described above are ever so present and other circumstances further cloud the issue of Black handicapped children getting a quality education. Problems abound in evaluation, placement, and the teaching of these children. Most noticeable is the problem of overpresentation of Blacks in classes for the mildly retarded. This was also presented in some earlier work by Silberberg and Silberberg (1974) as their data pointed out the following:

> If a Black (child) and a White child are not learning well, chances are that the Black child will be called mentally retarded and the White will be called Learning Disabled. The latter term has a much more positive image, suggesting that the Learning Disabled White child is average but needs extra remedial help to fulfill his potential. The Black child is seen as inferior and needing much less of a challenge, including much less of the money set aside for the Special education program. (p.56)

Help seems to be on the way for the Black handicapped child through recent legislations, litigations, and operational policies; but the "proof of the pudding is in the eating."

B. Preparation of Teachers

The second entity in the conceptual framework alludes to the preparation of teachers. Three variables are presented for examining a teacher's readiness for teaching and they are (1) personal qualities, (2) cultural experiences, and (3) formal training.

Let us examine some specific needs for teachers who work with Black handicapped children. Certain personal qualities should be possessed by teachers in general and especially by teachers of Black handicapped children. For the latter, teachers should understand the basic psychological needs of students, possess a sense of humor, accept varying pupil behaviors, and display creativity and originality in the teaching process.

Teachers must understand the problems of children from culturally different backgrounds (Gold & et. al., 1977). To accomplish this task it will be necessary for teachers to have certain experiences with Black children. Home and community visitations, affiliations with community organizations and affairs, and reading appropriate literature are but a few ways to gain this needed knowledge.

In institutions of higher learning prospective teachers must be trained to get the best and most from Black children. Too much emphasis has been placed on what students cannot learn as opposed to what they can learn. Teachers must be slow to condemn children to failure based on standardized test results and syntact of oral expressions. Teachers must

also develop an appreciation of cultural diversity as exemplified through unique types of dress, behavioral patterns, and learning styles.

In preparing teachers for the profession it is worthy to note that as of January, 1979, teacher education institutions seeking accreditation or reaccreditation from the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) have to incorporate multicultural education in their teacher education programs. It is our understanding that a similar move will be made for special education at the NCATE Board of Govenors meeting this year. The feeling is that as all levels of U.S. schooling become multicultural; the use of diverse assessment procedures, curricular modes, teaching styles, and resource materials will also become more prevalent. Thus, diversity should support the maximum development of all students, regardless of their cultural backgrounds, in reaching the full achievement of their cognitive and affective potentials (Klassen and et. al., 1980).

As ethnicity and mental capabilities of children are addressed sight must not be lost of the need of persons from diverse groups to enter the teaching profession. The profession cannot remain basically white, female, middle class, and English speaking. Baptiste and et. al. (1980) cited figures showing that in 1977 approximately 89% of the teachers in the United States were white and that 17% of the student population was minority. Good role models from a person's own ethnic group often motivate children in that group to aspire for similar positions in life.

C. The Learning Process

The third component of the framework presents the learning process.

Given are the three areas of learning-cognitive, psychomotor and affective- and clusters for teaching strategies/activities. Inherent in the three areas of learning are curricular concerns and the teaching strategies are provided as means for accomplishing the designated instructional objectives. Clusters for the teaching strategies and learning activities include antecedent events, present events, and subsequent events. Antecedent events may include planning the instructional setting, methods, and materials. Present events may focus on the actual implementation of the lesson to include the use of stimuli, methods, materials, and the appropriate rate of instruction. Subsequent events focus on the reinforcers, positive and/or negative, used after learning or an attempt at learning has taken place.

In the educational arena, Blacks need a curriculum and teachers who are sensitive to the uniqueness of their culture. A linkage must be created between the known and the unknown and respect must be shown for the individual learner. Objectives should be realistic-addressing cognitive, psychomotor, and affective needs but not necessarily in this order. There must also be shared responsibility in planning the instruction.

Teachers must realize that learning fascinates all children. The objective for managers of classrooms is to make the environment appropriate and the tasks relevant. Reward systems must also "say something" to the students and be at a frequency that encourages maintenance of desirable performance.

Many Blacks have failed so much in existing educational systems that it is often easier for them not to try than to try. They are told that they are "dumb" and educational practices employed have often proved the

original forecast.

The challenge is to use curricula and instructional materials that promote appreciation and acceptance of racial and cultural diversity (Gold and et. al., 1977). It is felt that by examining events in the proposed framework and planning, implementing and rewarding student performance accordingly; it will make schools more conducive for learning for all children.

To say the least, teachers of Black handicapped children must possess high personal qualities, know the cultural background of their pupils, and be trained to the extent that they can change cultural findings into learning resources within the classroom. The framework as presented in this paper is offered as an aid in assisting teachers to become more effective at working with children, especially culturally diverse children. Actually, a profile can be drawn depicting elements of concern in the child's cultural background and the curriculum and learning process can be made compatible to his needs.

D. Summary and Implications for Teacher Education Division

Though progress has been made in providing all handicapped children a free and appropriate education, there is still concern about educating Black handicapped children. Primary problems are in the areas of evaluation, placement, and "turning them on" to teaching. This paper is basically limited to the latter concern with reflections on the others.

A framework was designed for viewing concerns in meetings the needs of Black handicapped children. Extensive attention was given to cultural background and preparation of teachers as a basis for designing the curriculum and implementing the learning process. More knowledge about

cultural background and teacher training which emphasizes cultural diversity may provide us with greater insight on how to evaluate, where to place, and how to teach Black handicapped children.

In view of the contents of this paper, following are implications for TED in meeting the needs of Black handicapped children. The contribution of TED in dealing with the problem may be viewed in terms of an advocacy and facilitator role. TED's major concerns in this area should be as follows:

1. TED should advocate that college curricula focus on the unique needs of Black handicapped children - thus training teachers that can deal with cultural diversity.
2. TED needs to facilitate the preparation of more Blacks in leadership and dicision making positions in special education.
3. Black special educators need better opportunities to research and publish work relative to Black handicapped children.
4. TED must take a strong position on testing and placement procedures which discriminate against Blacks. The least restrictive environment concept must be championed by TED as many Black fall victim to existing evaluation and placement procedures.
5. TED must have at the top of its list of objectives - quality training of personnel in special education and the generation and dissemination of information pertinent to the field.
6. TED should address its resources to meeting the educational needs of Black handicapped children in today's schools.

In conclusion, this position paper at best only serves as a "tip of the iceberg" in addressing the educational needs of Black handicapped

children.

It is hoped, however, that ideas are presented that will enable educators to take a closer look at (1) the cultural background of Black handicapped children, (2) the needed preparation for teachers, (3) a more relevant teaching process, and (4) vital roles that professional organizations such as TED can play in meeting the needs of Black handicapped children. When these concerns are properly addressed, it seems reasonably safe to say that our schools will have made a giant step in providing culturally diverse handicapped children with an appropriate education.

James E. Walker is Dean of the School of Education, California State University, Hayward, California 94542

Ruben Gentry is Head of the Department of Special Education, Jackson State University, Jackson, Mississippi 39217

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